

THE REFLECTIVE LOG

WHY: Meta-cognitive self-correction is the key to becoming a better thinker, and it is the purpose for this assignment. Rather than mindlessly repeating one's own errors of reasoning, or being misled by the errors of others, one is able, through meta-cognition, alone or with the help of others, to reflect on one's own thinking. By applying critical thinking skills to the products of one's own critical thinking -- namely the judgments formed -- one is able to analyze, interpret, explain, and evaluate one's thinking by the standards of good reasoning. One can use one's own thinking to improve one's own thinking. This remarkable human mental ability, known as "meta-cognitive self-correction" is the engine which drives an individual's and a collaborative team's growth in thinking. It is why good thinking can be found in many people, even those who have not had the benefit of formal education. In some cases, its absence, even in those who have received many years of schooling or "scripted training," is why persons fail to mature as thinkers, and why their reasoning, regardless of their social status, leaves so much to be desired.

HOW: Using a log book or ledger book, one with permanently bound pages, keep a legibly handwritten weekly log beginning in WEEK 2 and continuing through WEEK 10. Write in pen. Keep notes in the log book as needed. Feel free to make pictures, symbols, trees, or diagrams if helpful in organizing ideas. Cross out things as you see fit, but do not erase anything. The process and progress of your interpretations, analyses, inferences, evaluations, and explanations will be manifest, albeit probably only in sketchy ways, in these preliminary notes and drawings. Since this log is about reflecting on thinking, those preliminary writings are valuable markers against which you can evaluate the progress and development of your ideas. Each week, when your thinking becomes more developed, compose a **final paragraph** for that week. **The week's final paragraph must include your reflection and evaluation of the thinking involved in addition to the date and description of event or circumstance.**

WHAT: Each week's **final paragraph** must relate a striking experience with regard to thinking critically or scientifically. What is striking for you might not be striking for someone else. It is YOUR experience and your reflection that this log is intended to record. Regrettable though it may be, the most fruitful learning experiences are often negative ones. In responding to the week's question you should first strive to find experiences of weak, poor, flawed, fallacious, uncritical, or erroneous thinking. On the other hand, since it takes some familiarity with quality to appreciate and to seek excellence, some of the entries in the log must also be about strong, correct, high quality experiences that are striking to you because of how good the scientific or critical thinking was. Of the nine weekly entries, no more than three may be about good thinking. **The final paragraph for each week must include your own evaluation (with supporting reasoning) of the quality of thinking being discussed.**

QUESTIONS FOR EACH WEEK:

W2: Why do you think that?	ASK: Another student, not in this course
W3: Seriously, how good is the evidence for that?	ASK: Anyone, not yourself
W4: What else did you consider?	ASK: Someone who has completed college
W5: Exactly why do you say that's the problem?	ASK: Your best friend
W6: What does making this decision imply?	ASK: Yourself
W7: How sound is the reason they're giving?	ASK: Yourself, relative to TV commercial
W8: What's really the problem here?	ASK: A professor
W9: What evidence would disconfirm our view?	ASK: Someone who agrees with you.
W10: What did I learn about my own thinking?	ASK: Yourself

Each week in class we will briefly discuss the reflection question of the week, so come prepared!